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How long is potassium iodide good for

What is Potassium Iodide (KI)? KI (potassium iodide) is a salt of stable (not radioactive) iodine that can help block radioactive iodine from being absorbed by the thyroid gland, thus protecting this gland from radiation injury. The thyroid gland is the part of the body that is most sensitive to radioactive iodine. People should take KI (potassium iodide) only on the advice of public health or emergency management officials. There are health risks associated with taking KI. KI (potassium iodide) does not keep radioactive iodine from entering the body and cannot reverse the health effects caused by radioactive iodine once the thyroid is damaged. KI (potassium iodide) only protects the thyroid, not other parts of the body, from radioactive iodine. KI (potassium iodide) cannot protect the body from radioactive elements other than radioactive iodine—if radioactive iodine is not present, taking KI is not protective and could cause harm. Table salt and foods rich in iodine do not contain enough iodine to block radioactive iodine from getting into your thyroid gland. Do not use table salt or food as a substitute for KI. Do not use dietary supplements that contain iodine in the place of KI (potassium iodide). They can be harmful and non-efficacious. Only use products that have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Back to Top How does KI (potassium iodide) work? The thyroid gland cannot tell the difference between stable and radioactive iodine. It will absorb both. KI (potassium iodide) blocks radioactive iodine from entering the thyroid. When a person takes KI, the stable iodine in the medicine gets absorbed by the thyroid. Because KI contains so much stable iodine, the thyroid gland becomes “full” and cannot absorb any more iodine—either stable or radioactive—for the next 24 hours. KI (potassium iodide) may not give a person 100% protection against radioactive iodine. Protection will increase depending on three factors. Time after contamination: The sooner a person takes KI, the more time the thyroid will have to “fill up” with stable iodine. Absorption: The amount of stable iodine that gets to the thyroid depends on how fast KI is absorbed into the blood. Dose of radioactive iodine: Minimizing the total amount of radioactive iodine a person is exposed to will lower the amount of harmful radioactive iodine the thyroid can absorb. Back to Top Who can take KI (potassium iodide)? The thyroid glands of a fetus and of an infant are most at risk of injury from radioactive iodine. Young children and people with low amounts of iodine in their thyroid are also at risk of thyroid injury. Infants (including breast-fed infants) Infants have the highest risk of getting thyroid cancer after being exposed to radioactive iodine. All infants, including breast-fed infants need to be given the dosage of KI (potassium iodide) recommended for infants. Infants (particularly newborns) should receive a single dose of KI. More than a single dose may lead to later problems with normal development. Other protective measures should be used. In cases where more than one dose is necessary, medical follow up may be necessary. Children The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends that all children internally contaminated with (or likely to be internally contaminated with) radioactive iodine take KI (potassium iodide), unless they have known allergies to iodine (contraindications). Young Adults The FDA recommends that young adults (between the ages of 18 and 40 years) internally contaminated with (or likely to be internally contaminated with) radioactive iodine take the recommended dose of KI (potassium iodide). Young adults are less sensitive to the effects of radioactive iodine than are children. Pregnant Women Because all forms of iodine cross the placenta, pregnant women should take KI (potassium iodide) to protect the growing fetus. Pregnant women should take only one dose of KI following internal contamination with (or likely internal contamination with) radioactive iodine. Breastfeeding Women Women who are breastfeeding should take only one dose of KI (potassium iodide) if they have been internally contaminated with (or are likely to be internally contaminated with) radioactive iodine. They should be prioritized to receive other protective action measures. Adults Adults older than 40 years should not take KI (potassium iodide) unless public health or emergency management officials say that contamination with a very large dose of radioactive iodine is expected. Adults older than 40 years have the lowest chance of developing thyroid cancer or thyroid injury after contamination with radioactive iodine. Adults older than 40 are more likely to have allergic reactions to or adverse effects from KI. Back to Top How is KI (potassium iodide) given? The FDA has approved two different forms of KI (potassium iodide), tablets and liquid, that people can take by mouth after a radiation emergency involving radioactive iodine. Tablets come in two strengths, 130 milligram (mg) and 65 mg. The tablets have lines on them so that they may be cut into smaller pieces for lower doses. For the oral liquid solution, each milliliter (mL) contains 65 mg of KI (potassium iodide). According to the FDA, the following doses are appropriate to take after internal contamination with (or likely internal contamination with) radioactive iodine: Newborns from birth to 1 month of age should be given 16 mg (¼ of a 65 mg tablet or ¼ mL of solution). This dose is for both nursing and non-nursing newborn infants. Infants and children between 1 month and 3 years of age should take 32 mg (½ of a 65 mg tablet OR ½ mL of solution). This dose is for both nursing and non-nursing infants and children. Children between 3 and 18 years of age should take 65 mg (one 65 mg tablet OR 1 mL of solution). Children who are adult size (greater than or equal to 150 pounds) should take the full adult dose, regardless of their age. Adults should take 130 mg (one 130 mg tablet OR two 65 mg tablets OR two mL of solution). Women who are breastfeeding should take the adult dose of 130 mg. Back to Top How often should KI (potassium iodide) be taken? Taking a stronger dose of KI (potassium iodide), or taking KI more often than recommended, does not offer more protection and can cause severe illness or death. A single dose of KI (potassium iodide) protects the thyroid gland for 24 hours. A one-time dose at recommended levels is usually all that is needed to protect the thyroid gland. In some cases, people can be exposed to radioactive iodine for more than 24 hours. If that happens, public health or emergency management officials may tell you to take one dose of KI (potassium iodide) every 24 hours for a few days. Avoid repeat dosing with KI (potassium iodide) for pregnant and breastfeeding women and newborn infants. Back to Top What are the side effects of KI (potassium iodide)? Side effects of KI (potassium iodide) may include stomach or gastro-intestinal upset, allergic reactions, rashes, and inflammation of the salivary glands. When taken as recommended, KI (potassium iodide) can cause rare adverse health effects related to the thyroid gland. These rare adverse effects are more likely if a person: Takes a higher than recommended dose of KI Takes the drug for several days Has a pre-existing thyroid disease. Newborn infants (less than 1 month old) who receive more than one dose of KI (potassium iodide) are at risk for developing a condition known as hypothyroidism (thyroid hormone levels that are too low). If not treated, hypothyroidism can cause brain damage. Infants who receive more than a single dose of KI should have their thyroid hormone levels checked and monitored by a doctor. Avoid repeat dosing of KI to newborns. Back to Top Where can I get KI (potassium iodide)? KI (potassium iodide) is available without a prescription. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)external icon External Web Site Icon has approved some brands of KI. People should only take KI (potassium iodide) on the advice of public health or emergency management officials. There are health risks associated with taking KI. More detailed information on KI (potassium iodide) can be found at the FDA Websiteexternal icon. Back to Top. You don't hear much about potassium—but you should. It's important for muscle strength, nerve functioning, and a healthy cardiovascular system, says Janet Brill, Ph.D., R.D., a Philadelphia-based nutritionist. The nutrient's in lots of delicious foods (think: melon, avocados, bananas, and white beans). But even if you get the recommended 4,700 mg per day, you still might have a deficiency. Why? The more sodium you consume, the more potassium your body excretes, says Brill. Tip-offs that you need more can be hard to notice, but if you experience any of these signs and can't figure out what's behind them, check in with your doc to have your potassium levels tested. You're Constantly Wiped Out , Every cell in your body needs the right amount of potassium to function, and a sustained dip can result in generalized fatigue. So if your regular sweat session leaves you exhausted and you know you're getting enough sleep, potassium might be the cause. (Get more healthy-eating tips and delicious recipe ideas from Scratch, a cookbook from our CEO, Maria Rodale.) You Have High Blood Pressure , Potassium helps relax blood vessels, says Brill. Without enough of it, they can become constricted, which causes blood pressure to soar. Not sure how often you should be checking your blood pressure? This handy guide on how frequently you should get various health checks done should help. You Eat Primarily Out of Bags and Boxes , Consuming processed foods almost ensures that you have low potassium because of all the sodium chips, crackers, and frozen meals contain, says Brill. Cut back on the salty stuff to help your body hold on to more of the potassium you're eating. Your Muscles Feel Weak or Crampy , Potassium plays a role in smooth muscle contraction, so when levels are low, you might experience aches and even spasms, says Brill. Feeling low on energy? Try these energizing yoga moves. Your Heart Skips a Beat. It's scary and freaky when your heart suddenly pounds or your heart rate speeds up for no apparent reason at all. Lots of things can cause skipped beats or palpitations, but low potassium is one of them. Get the answers to five other big questions about your heart. You Feel Faint or Dizzy. A large drop in potassium levels can slow your heartbeat enough to make you feel like you're going to pass out. It's not common, and many other factors can be the cause, but if you experience this, see your M.D. right away. Constipation , Sounds crazy, but low potassium levels slow down other bodily functions, and your digestive system is no exception. Bloating and abdominal cramping can also occur. Of course, a potassium deficiency isn't the only thing that can make you feel puffed than usual. Check out five health foods that can make you bloated. Tingling and Numbness , Potassium helps keep your nerves healthy, and without it, you may experience that annoying pins and needles sensation. 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